

# SAMA

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# MONTHLY



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## VIRTUAL LEARNING ESSENTIALS FOR MUSICIANS

With the start of the 2020-21 school year beginning with the vast majority of students starting the year learning online, the large number of SAMA students currently taking lessons online, and the SAMA Virtual Recital coming up, I thought would share a few tips to help students be best equipped for learning virtually this year. If there is one thing I have learned teaching music lessons online over the past few months, it is that not every computer, tablet, laptop, webcam, or microphone is suitable for music students wishing to learn online. I have learned there are three essentials for music students learning online: a device with a stable internet connection, an HD webcam, and a quality microphone.

### **Internet Connection: WiFi vs. Ethernet**

Would you like to avoid glitching, stuttering, cutting out, or lag during video calls? I highly recommend using an Ethernet cable to connect your device to the router rather than using the usual WiFi network. Ethernet, a wired connection, is known for much faster internet speeds and a consistent connection that is unaffected by walls, number of current users, or distance from the router. Switching from WiFi to an Ethernet cable is the easiest way to increase the overall quality of video calls through Skype, Zoom, Teams, Hangouts, etc. Keep in mind, using Ethernet does require a laptop, desktop computer, or other device with an Ethernet port.

### **Camera: Built-in Camera vs. External Webcam**

Students have many options when it comes to the camera they use for video during online lessons, but I recommend using any camera that provides HD resolution and has the ability to be easily moved to different viewing angles. Luckily for us, almost all current tablets and laptop computers are equipped with an HD camera for video calls, and changing the camera angle is as easy as tilting the device. External USB webcams are available for those that want a clearer, higher-res picture than their device currently offers.



### Microphone: Built-in Microphone vs. External Microphone

Using a quality microphone is of utmost importance for music students. Just like with built-in webcams, there are a wide variety of microphones that come built into most devices. Unfortunately for musicians, almost every built-in microphone is intended for everyday voice calling and not for use with a musical instrument or a singer. This leads to degradation of sound, static, glitching, loss of dynamic range, compression, other unpleasanties during video calls. Because of this, I recommend all music students use a quality external microphone to use during online lessons. Not only will the teacher be able to hear the student and their instrument more clearly during lessons, the student can also use the microphone to bring higher quality audio to their own recordings. Students participating in the upcoming SAMA Virtual Recital should keep this in mind.

### Recommendations:

For the best experience, I recommend students use a laptop connected via Ethernet, a built-in or external webcam, along with a \$50-\$100 USB condenser microphone or USB audio interface/microphone combination. A set up such as this is achievable with only a few minor upgrades and will lead to a much better lesson experience for student and teacher.

If upgrading equipment isn't an option just remember: WiFi isn't as reliable as Ethernet, using only a tablet or iPad isn't as good as using a laptop or computer due to the inferior built-in microphone, and smartphones are only to be used as a last resort due to their small screen size.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

SAMA is closed for  
Labor Day



sept  
7

Rachel Stern's Birthday



sept  
8

Maria Crystalia's Birthday



sept  
20

Virtual Recital  
Live Broadcast @3pm



sept  
26

## STUDENT OF THE MONTH

“Ankit K.

is an awesome student.

Very smart, polite and always responsible. He is spirited and always seeking to go a step forward on the method. As a teacher one can see that he will be successful in any endeavor he commits to. It's great to teach someone like you!”



Alfredo Velasquez,  
Drum Instructor